



News Release

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
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Forest Service Uses Logging to Protect Historic Mining Town Site

(WALDEN, Colo.) March 10, 2014 – When one thinks about protecting a sensitive resource, using heavy equipment in excess of 40 tons to cut down and extract trees is probably not what comes to mind. However, that's exactly what the Routt National Forest's Parks Ranger District did to protect remnants of the historic mining town site of Teller City.

Located in Jackson County, Colorado, this unique and significant silver mining boom town was occupied during the late 1870s and early 1880s before being abandoned "almost overnight," according to some accounts. It is estimated that the population dropped from around 1,300 to less than 300 within a two-year period. Since that time, like all abandoned structures that are subjected to the harsh elements, including heavy snow loads, Teller City's structures have succumbed to Mother Nature. All that is left of this once vibrant town are dilapidated buildings and traces of foundations scattered across a 49 acre area.

Fortunately, the Parks Ranger District has proactively taken steps to document and preserve the history of this site. First, a Passport in Time project was completed in 1994. This was followed by installation of onsite interpretive panels that highlight various people, buildings, stories and the overall history of the site. Removing dead and dying trees to protect the site's remaining infrastructure and the public was the next step taken by the District.

Falling trees killed by a pine beetle epidemic that began sweeping across this part of northern Colorado in the mid 1990s have posed a serious threat to the integrity of this site. Mitigating this threat is important, as this site has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Approximately 80-90 percent of mature lodgepole pine within Teller City's boundary were killed by beetles, and have since become a dual threat from trees falling on structures and increased fuel loads.

To protect this important site, the Forest Service decided in 2008 to use winter logging to remove dead trees that threatened what remains of Teller City. Even with at least 1 ½ feet of protective snowpack present across the site, logging operations would still need to be monitored to ensure site disturbance was held in check. This included minimizing disturbance outside of designated skid trails (existing roads and trails) and landings, as well as incurring less than 10 percent disturbance to cultural structures, foundations, features, or depressions. In the fall of 2012, these items were surveyed, mapped and flagged by Parks District Archeologist Price Heiner to set up periodic monitoring of logging operations by Parks Ranger District staff.

After careful project design, layout and concurrence from the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, logging operations were completed in February and March of 2013. Post-implementation monitoring after the site was snow-free showed that all project objectives were met in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Very little ground disturbance

was noted, even in the designated skidding areas. Of the 97 structures, features, foundations, and/or depressions that were flagged for monitoring, only two displayed any signs of disturbance or damage.

The Colorado State Historic Preservation Office agreed that implementation of this project resulted in successfully retaining the site's integrity, which is a key requirement for listing in the NRHP. In fact, according to Heiner, "The site's now open nature actually enhanced the integrity of setting, feeling, and association in that the site currently appears more like it did when it was occupied in the late 1800's." In terms of the effort that went into making this project successful, Heiner went on to say, "This level of success was not possible without the professional work of our Timber Sale Administrator Kevin Bridges and the logging contractor. It was truly a collaborative effort at multiple levels."

Now that logging slash is sufficiently cleaned up, this historic site is once again available for the public to learn about and enjoy. For more information about the historic Teller City town site, please contact the Parks Ranger District at 970-723-2703.

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